

frontier

Vol. 8: No. 7

MAY 26, 1973

PRICE: 49 PAISE

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Editor: Samar Sen

PRINTED AT MODERN INDIA PRESS
 RAJA SUBODH MULLICK SQUARE,
 CALCUTTA-13 AND PUBLISHED WEEKLY
 BY GEMINAL PUBLICATIONS (P) LTD.
 7 SAMAR SEN FROM 61, MOTT LANE,
 CALCUTTA-13
 TELEPHONE: 243202

FOR DISREGARDING NIXON

THE job of the Congress president is one of the trickiest in this country. As the chief of the ruling party, he is supposed to influence policies, if not lay them down. But over the years the position of Congress president has been steadily whittled down by successive Prime Ministers who have never lost an opportunity to put him in his place. As a result, Congressmen who want to serve the country make a bee-line for ministership. The post of Congress president has become the second best to deputy ministership, and it is doubtful if there would have been any taker but for the perquisites of the post, including newspaper coverage of everything that the president in his wisdom may choose to say. The last privilege seems to have gone to the head of the present incumbent, Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma, whose political weightlessness has helped his elevation to Congress presidentship. Unable to resist the temptation to catch the headlines, he has fallen into the habit of speaking harshly of parties and governments, who, taking him for the nonentity that he is, seldom mind.

It is this habit that has landed Dr Sharma in trouble. Had he been gifted with a little intelligence he would have long found out that the days when the Prime Minister would give the cue for an anti-American chorus were over. He thought the cue the Prime Minister gave last year was still valid and poured forth a diatribe against the USA for planning to take revenge on India for the failure of the American policy in this region in 1971. As he was speaking at a conference of Congressmen in Uttar Pradesh which goes to the polls in less than a year's time, he quite appropriately alleged that the Congress (O), the Jana Sangh, and the BJD, which are the main opposition parties in the State, are conspiring with the USA to disrupt internal security and create chaos and confusion by violent means. Little could he imagine that the Prime Minister would react so sharply, almost viciously, to this speech which was all right a year ago. Not only did the Prime Minister severely criticise the party president's speech at the meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Party, but she apparently directed that the President be briefed about the criticism. It is doubtful if a Congress president has ever been publicly reprimanded by the Prime Minister in this fashion.

It is not a sudden fit of temper that made the Prime Minister speak so harshly. She spoke with deliberation to make amends for the indiscretion of Dr. Sharma. President Nixon of Watergate fame is not a person to attach to Dr. Sharma's allegation the unimportance that it deserves. Less than a fortnight ago Nixon had, in his foreign policy report to the U.S. Congress, frowned on Indian leaders' using the United States as a "scapegoat in domestic disputes", which did not serve the two governments' common objective of improved relations. This was as plain a warning as could be that relations will not improve if criticism of the U.S. did not stop. Dr. Sharma did exactly what Nixon forbade Indian leaders to do; he accused the U.S. of an anti-India stance to denigrate the parties arrayed against the Congress in the Uttar Pradesh elections. Only a political simpleton could fail to learn from the recent speeches by the Prime Minister and the External Affairs Minister. Nixon's report to the U.S. Congress, the proposal for further food imports, and Brezhnev's projected visit to the U.S. next month to meet Nixon. A party president who cannot swim with the current and repeats in 1973 what he was authorised to say in 1971-72 cannot claim to be progressive. Dr. Sharma should quit so that Nixon may not be angry with India. The Prime Minister has apologised for his backwardness; in India's interest it is now up to Dr. Sharma to demonstrate how much he regretted his backwardness.

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Scarcity And High Prices

The food situation in West Bengal is critical. Taking advantage of the half-hearted and halting measures taken by the State Government in imposing a levy on land holdings and for procurement of the levied amount, the traders, in collusion with the bureaucracy, have created an artificial scarcity of foodgrains and pushed up the prices of all essential commodities. The prices of rice, wheat, pulses and other foodgrains, edible oil, sugar, coal and kerosene are spiralling. In the open market rice now sells at Rs 2.75 to Rs 3 per kilogram.

The State Government had earlier claimed that the rice harvest in West Bengal would be over 4.4 million tonnes this year as against 3m tonnes produced last year. Despite this bumper crop the Government has fixed a moderate target of 300,000 tonnes for rice procurement. The remaining marketable surplus has been left to the traders and kulaks to dispose of on the black market. Because of the pro-jotedar procurement policy the Government could not collect even half of the targeted amount. Its softness towards the traders was apparent from the very beginning. When the wholesale trade was taken over in most of the other States, the West Bengal Government refused to go in for wholesale trading in foodgrains. It allowed profiteers to hoard the entire stock in underground godowns. Some fake raids were organised in different parts of the State, but only a few hundred quintals of rice were obtained. The Government seems not much happy with even what it had done in the interest of big farmers and rich jotedars. It has now decided to give more concessions to them, lifting the restriction on the movement of rice from one district to another. Now a farmer can carry three quintals of rice from one district to another daily. Similarly a trader can carry ten quintals of rice a day from one district to

another. While the Government purchase centres will be helplessly waiting for the arrival of rice, the farmers and traders will be allowed to freely carry surplus rice to the markets in deficit areas and sell them at higher prices. If this position is allowed to continue, the entire marketable surplus of rice will soon pass into the hands of the hoarders. The price of rice is bound to increase further in village areas because of this free movement of foodgrains. Moreover, the cut in the rice quota in the statutory rationing areas will definitely hit hard people living in villages. Modified rationing has practically come to a stop resulting in a steady rise in prices of foodgrains in villages. Now reduction of the rice quota in the statutory rationing areas, which have a higher purchasing power than the villages, will only mean a heavy rush of rice to this area, causing further scarcity and rise in prices of foodgrains in rural areas. The price of rice is already beyond the reach of the majority of the village population and a further rise will certainly lead to widespread distress and starvation. Despite scarcity and poor procurement, the State Government is strangely reluctant to impose a levy on a graded scale on land holdings and take stern measures to procure the levied amount.

To cover up its misdeeds, the State Government is presenting every day complex sets of statistics on foodgrain production and procurement. If statistics could appease the hunger of the starving people, the Government would have easily bagged the prize for it. The euphoria of the green revolution is long past and with it the statistics that fed the people into a false sense of security over the food situation. The safety built up by the statistics has yielded place to deep anxiety.

A New Atlantic Charter

M. Alain Ravennes, official representative of the Mouvement pour l'Indépendance de l'Europe, has prescribed the manner in which the European countries should react to Henry Kissinger's proposal for a new Atlantic Charter. The new American move is not as innocuous as it appears on paper. The American allies in Europe and Japan have travelled a long distance since US aid helped them in a big way to recover from the ruins of the Second World War. But it is neither in the interest of America nor Russia that there develops any new centre of power. This explains why the Kissinger move has not produced any reaction in Russia; the two super-powers are now in an advanced stage of rapprochement. They are no longer bent on maintaining an exclusive supremacy; there is now a tacit agreement on improving their superiority. Naturally the developments in Europe cannot but raise concern to the USA and for that matter to the USSR. The European countries have not only progressed fast economically but are also committed to further growth. What the Americans, however, find more disturbing is the pooling of resources by the Europeans, their joint efforts in certain directions, and their keenness to develop their own defence systems. All these developments seriously challenge the status quo in Europe which the USA and the USSR would not like to be disturbed since it corresponds to their respective ideas of the Western world and the socialist world. M. Ravennes has suggested that the Kissinger proposal should be considered in the above political context. Keeping aside platitudes like 're-establishing Western unity on lasting foundations, making autonomy within the Atlantic wholly dependent on its cohesion and striking a new balance between self-interest and the common interest', it appears that the proposed charter aims at perpetuat-

ing U.S. economic domination and political superiority over Europe and Japan. M. Ravennes said that Europe can accept the American line only at the cost of "abandoning for a long time, perhaps forever, the hope of asserting itself". Will there be a Europe which will stubbornly refuse to toe the American line, conduct its own affairs as it thinks best and assert its presence in the Atlantic? Fortunately the reactions of the European countries can inspire little confidence among the Americans. Not one European ally is prepared to link the question of burden sharing in defence with the forthcoming international trade and monetary negotiations. It was de Gaulle's sense of nationalism which led him to develop a defence policy outside NATO and this policy is being continued by his successors. France is opposed to any link between defence and economic matters. Britain is in favour of increasing European joint effort in defence. There is now a feeling that much of the U.S. pressure tactics can be neutralized if its defence protection is paid for. Mr Kissinger wanted the charter to be adopted at the earliest possible but the Europeans are in no hurry to consider it.

A Nymph-like Calcutta?

A correspondent writes:

A new hoarding over one of Calcutta's busiest intersections (there may be several others put up lately) hopefully proclaims: *Kolkata ekdin Kollolini Tilottama habey* (Calcutta shall one day become a murmuring nymph), a well-known line from a famous poet who turned away to the solitude of the cinnamon island. Whatever the meaning of this line might be, the advertisers' hope may come true when the streets of the city begin to babble like rivulets once the monsoon starts in earnest. The problem of waterlogging is not new to the city but this year it is going to be perhaps the worst ever,

according to a newspaper report. Paradoxically, this is also the year which is witnessing the greatest flurry of activities over long stretches of important roadways, partially or wholly barred to traffic, apparently in an attempt to tackle the formidable drainage menace.

The cutting and digging of roads, with mountains of turned up earth and building materials overlooking deep roadside ravines where workmen spasmodically lay pipes, is part of this prolonged siege in a war on waterlogging. Already for months it has been causing pedestrian and vehicular traffic detour. The CMDA, we are told, is trying to mitigate waterlogging and consequent public health hazards which the present sewer system which carries both sewage and storm-water presents during the monsoon by causing overflow of sewage into the streets. It has entrusted the Calcutta Corporation with the task of building storm water channels to separate sanitary sewerage from the drainage system. Of the 25 such projects undertaken by the Corporation only one has so far come off; the rest have been stalled by short supply of building materials and fund allocations and are unlikely to be carried through before the monsoon breaks. In any event, the most urgently needed channels will remain unfinished.

All this goes to show the futility of any attempt to improve Calcutta's civic life without solving the larger problems of state or national economy and administration. Some of the construction work is, for example, said to have been hampered by strikes and power-cuts in certain cement factories in Bihar as well as alleged slow progress of work by contractors' labourers.

There is no reason to believe that those who profess to set their hearts on a cleaner, healthier and prettier Calcutta would like to have a look at these larger problems. As with the old colonial rulers and their native *mitsuddi-banias*, Calcutta still remains a place for making money

to their half-caste progeny—the new affluent class—who contribute nothing to the city's cultural or civic development. They have their posh residential districts, amusement rows, clubs and cabarets like the old European residents and their native vassals. Even so, annual visitations like cholera and small-pox may threaten their well-being too when they assume grave proportions and waterlogging most certainly interfere with their business or pleasure cruise through the city's overcrowded streets. Hence the occasional noise about civic problems in the suborned press and mass media. But it is the comprador and feudal origin of Calcutta's nobility and their wholly parasitic character in the economic and political life of the nation that is strangling the city to a slow death. Still, Calcutta remains the true image of the country as a whole and the role of its dominant elite is the same as that of the nation's ruling minority. It still preserves the tradition of the city of colonial renaissance, as an eminent Bengali social historian has called it. A few newly-built cities in other parts of the country may try to assume the outward trappings of an advanced industrial culture more consistently, but they do not reflect the reality of our parasitical semi-colonial and semi-feudal economy. Calcutta does not attempt to hide that reality and retains traces of its origins and inheritance. Thus beggars, hawkers, pavement bazaars, cutfruit vendors, stinking garbage heaps, choked sewerage, waterlogged streets are as much a part of our city, the typical comprador metropolis, as the new signs of affluence born of the same social and economic conditions. The squalid and the tawdry are but two aspects of the same reality. Both are hangovers of the past and must stand or fall together.

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View from Delhi

Monsoon Crisis

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

THE crucial weeks between the budget session of Parliament which has just ended and the monsoon session beginning on July 23 will decide many things, including whether Mrs Gandhi will risk a poll in Uttar Pradesh and Orissa. The profile of the monsoon will be clear by the third week of July and it will no more be a gamble.

The feverish plans for massive food imports have little to do with the rabi procurement shortfalls. The gestation period for imports is a minimum of 180 days which means the imported grain will save the public distribution system from collapse. The imports are to cushion off any pressures resulting from a bad monsoon.

Mrs Gandhi has been thinking of a snap poll in Uttar Pradesh in November. But the food situation would worsen before it improves and September might witness the peak law and order situation. Much as she would like to deprive the opposition of time for preparation and go for an early poll, the odds favour an indefinite postponement if a victory is not assured. Mrs Gandhi has been banking on the possibility of the Congress(O) in Uttar Pradesh going over to the BKD with whom she can have an alliance. The Congress(O) on its part is depending on Mr Kamalapati Tripathi to sabotage Mrs Gandhi's chances. The picture is still confused in Uttar Pradesh but there is little doubt that the Congress has no reason to be very optimistic. The cynics in the Central Hall say the defections bill, introduced last week, will not be enacted until after the Uttar Pradesh elections are over because the Congress might badly need some post-election defections to retain power in the State.

On the last day of the Lok Sabha session, the Prime Minister chose to debunk her party chief, Dr Shree Dayal Sharma, whose antics have eroded her credibility. In many words, she rebuked Dr Sharma's latest anti-United States tirade. She had set the pace for it though she did not name the United States directly in her pronouncement. The compulsive need to mend fences with the United States to be able to get all the aid needed there. More, she seems to have realised that her campaign against Opposition parties, complete with allegations of a sinister grand alliance plan inspired by the United States, has been proving counterproductive. Dr Sharma was continuing the campaign long after it should have been called off. This seems to have annoyed the Prime Minister. It would not be surprising if Dr Sharma feigns illness and chooses to pack up from Delhi so that an interim president can run the show.

The search for scapegoats is on. The dummy Chief Ministers plucked into State politics by Mrs Gandhi are in trouble. Two of them (Mr P. V. Narasimha Rao and Mr Nandini Satpathy) are already out of office and others are facing massive revolts. Mr Uma Shankar Dixit is being blamed for all the trouble though they were essentially the Prime Minister's choice. Mrs Gandhi handed over the truncated Home portfolio to Mr Dixit in good time before the law and order problem became a king-sized one. The Centre is under the control of the Cabinet Secretariat in the new set-up and the Prime Minister's Secretariat continues to be all powerful.

All the same the law and order situation is bound to deteriorate

India's Cold War

R. P. MULLICK

IF the joint Indo-Bangladesh package deal offered to Pakistan is India's response to the increasing critical attitude of international society to the negative outlook on relations with Pakistan, then it is obvious that such offers will not much advance the cause of peace.

For considerably over one year now India has been pursuing a Pakistan policy which bears a disconcerting resemblance to the USA's cold-war tactics immediately after World War II. The USA's objective was maintenance of the status quo through the employment of coercive diplomacy—economic offensive, cultural penetration, infiltration of ideological dogmas, and imposing a consensus with the pressure of strategic propaganda. India's present goal is to perpetuate its preponderant position in the sub-continent by securing Pakistan's assent to its scheme of power-balance. Since India lacks the vast resources of the USA and the latter's strategic pre-eminence as a super-power, it is making up the deficiency through a borrowed image (of the USA) and diplomatic offensive—basing its anticipation on a second surrender by Pakistan to its exclusive claims to hold the power-balance in the region and dictate a particular pattern of regional settlement.

But, contrary to expectations, Bhutto has refused to accept the joint Indo-Bangladesh propositions. What is more surprising, he has stood out against all attempts to suborn him through a barrage of propaganda about the "magnanimity" of India's offer to release the POWs—minus about 200 of them, to be tried by Bangladesh as war-criminals—and the desirability of accepting Biharis (originally Indians) as Pakistani citizens. The concern for the Bengalis now in Pakistan is not matched by any recognition that the release

and return of Pakistani prisoners is an equally humanitarian problem. The resolution passed by the UN Security Council in December 1971, demanding this requirement of international law to be fulfilled, is forgotten. The relevant article of the Geneva Convention is quite explicit about the POWs' "release and repatriation after the war is over". Evidently the argument that India cannot take a unilateral step because of non-concurrence of the Government of Bangladesh with it has not really convinced international opinion.

What were the circumstances leading to the surrender of the Pakistan army and civilian employees of the erstwhile administration of East Pakistan to India's army command? As a result of the declaration of a "state of war" by the Yahya Khan regime against India, the latter's armed forces started military operations in retaliation on the express orders of the Government of India. Since the provisional Government of Bangladesh was NOT recognized by the Government of India until after war had started between India and Pakistan, no joint Indo-Bangladesh army command existed when the war operations began. Repetitive calls to the Pakistan army in East Pakistan for surrender were made by the then C-in-C of India acting on behalf of his Government and NOT on behalf of any joint Indo-Bangladesh command. The surrender came in response to such calls: hence, the prisoners taken into custody by the agents of the Government of India are the latter's legal charge. This exclusive exercise by India of its right as the captor power has not been disputed by Bangladesh; in fact, the latter has been relieved thereby of a huge financial liability.

The impending discussion in the UN on the retention of the prisoners is

several weeks to come and there is no blame to be put on the opposition. The Prime Minister has been showing signs of a clear loss of nerve in some of her speeches but of late, she has stopped making provocative speeches, and is trying to softpedal her campaign against the Opposition. The decision to prolong the state of emergency has much to do with the uncertainty in Uttar Pradesh. It might become necessary to use the emergency powers to justify indefinite postponement of elections where they are due, in U.P. and Bihar. And to contain the law and order problem that will develop. The Pakistani prisoners of war issue will not be solved in the near future and that provides the obvious moral alibi for prolonging the state of emergency. The prisoners of war is a low priority issue for Mr Bhutto and this is where Indian manipulations have gone wrong from the beginning. He did not make it a point at the Simla summit contrary to all expectations and the argument is: if India and Bangladesh could make politics out of the issue what is wrong about Pakistan making the issue to the same end? In taking the issue to the World Court, Mr Bhutto has made sure of a prolonged stalemate and check-mate of the India-Pakistan joint offer. The joint offer itself was the result of heavy Soviet pressure and it took a great deal of persuasion by Mr Bhutto to get Bangladesh round to making the offer. The war crimes trial will not take place until after the war according to present indications while the litigation in the World Court will drag on endlessly. Meantime, the UN General Assembly will be meeting and India will be making the case which supports it on the Bangladesh issue in the UN and will not endorse its position on the prisoners of war.

In any case, the Prime Minister has little time for India-Pakistan relations because Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are the immediate target. In the monsoons, she hopes everything will be just fine.

regarded as an unpalatable contingency—one that should rather be avoided. But if and when the discussion takes place, it would be difficult to prevent charges being raised that India has been spending, alone, huge sums of money over this business out of political motivation, and that too not very laudable. Already the suspicion has been expressed that India is using the prisoners as political pawns; an open discussion in the UN will probably lead to the airing of more uncharitable views. Could it really sound as a consistent stand that India feels the need to withhold or delay the release and repatriation of POWs lest Pakistan makes hostile use of them? Can India still hold that it wants to normalise relations with its neighbour?

A comprehensive settlement of Indo-Pakistan and Pakistan-Bangladesh problems is hard to visualize in the context of the package-deal offer which virtually stems from an attitude of self-righteousness. The entire framework is predetermined; even the number of POWs to be tried and the modality of their trial have been fixed, leaving no scope for alternative courses to be suggested, discussed and opted for on the basis of voluntarily given assent. Replies from Treasury benches given in the Indian Parliament indicate that the Government does not contemplate any further initiative, nor would entertain one from Pakistan apropos the package-deal offer. This boils down to "take it or leave it". Does India expect Pakistan to sign on the dotted line? Does Bangladesh expect Pakistan to assent to the latter's holding ex-parte trials of

Pakistani nationals under post hoc municipal laws?

It appears that the possible consequences of the projected trials have not been assessed by India and Bangladesh; or if assessed, they do not care even if a number of valuable and trained Bengali army personnel lose their liberty as a result of retaliatory "treason" trials in Pakistan. Bangladesh is now making an ex-post facto claim for its municipal court to jurisdiction over the sphere of international law. Has Bangladesh the authority to try Pakistani war criminals by the application of its own laws?

There, it is said, is the analogy of the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials. But consider the following facts:

(I) All the major participants in the Moscow declaration (October 1943), who laid the legal framework for their claim to try German war criminals for "atrocities" had international personality, i.e. they were recognized States of the world community who were signatories to the Kellogg Pact (1928) and the anti-war declarations under the auspices of the League of Nations; their joint war council and operational command was a fact at the time of, even long before, the unconditional surrender of German armed forces. But Bangladesh did NOT possess any international personality at the time of occurrence of the Pakistani genocidal crimes, and hence its claim to uphold international conventions, based on Nuremberg principles, for trying suspected criminals (whom its forces did not capture on territory under the effective control of its provisional Government) is NOT tenable.

(II) No declaration was made by the provisional Government of Bangladesh, at the time of the alleged genocidal crimes by Pakistanis, that it intended to adhere to international law and practice in this matter of trial, and that it accepted or desired to accept all obligations and liabilities flowing therefrom.

(III) The Government of Bangla-

desh has not adduced any reason to why the International Court of Justice is not deemed competent to try it for the trial of Pakistani war criminals and why the question cannot be referred to the court in accordance with Articles 92 and 93 (2) of the UN Charter.

Since the Government of Bangladesh appears keen on getting admittance to the UN as a member state, it is all the more intriguing why it should lack faith in the relevant organ of the UN for the purpose of obtaining justice.

The International Commission of Jurists in February this year urged the Bangladesh Government to set up a tribunal with a majority of judges from neutral countries to satisfy world opinion that these will be trials, and not mere acts of vengeance. The Commission further commended that "prisoners against whom there is prima facie evidence of having committed war-crimes or crimes against humanity during hostilities, should be tried by an international tribunal under international penal law."

Remember, it was an Indian judge who told the international tribunals which conducted the Tokyo trials of the Japanese Prime Minister, General Tojo, and others that the term "aggressor" should not come to mean only "leaders of the losing party" and that "the name of justice should not be allowed to be invoked only for the prolongation of the pursuit of vindictive retaliation. Thus, the question of responsibility in this business of trial of Pakistani POWs by Bangladesh assumes significance that cannot be ignored."

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Economic Profile Of Bangladesh

Sisir K. Majumdar

BANGLADESH is a country of poor people. The Planning Commission of the Bangladesh Government commented in its report in October 1972: "Nowhere else in the world is so much poverty shared by so many squeezed into so little areas". Due to obvious geopolitical factors, Bangladesh has become the hunting ground of imperialist, pseudo-socialist and social-imperialist vultures. Let us deep into the stark realities of this new politically liberated but economically yet-to-be emancipated semi-colonial and backward country.

The average income of the country's 75 million inhabitants was about \$58 last year; it is among the half a dozen poorest countries in the world. The poorest 20 per cent of

the population had an average cash income equivalent to just over \$20 a year. Population growth is 3 per cent per year; it adds about 2½ millions per year to the existing population.

Bangladesh is the most densely inhabited country in the world (except Hongkong and Singapore) with 1,360 people to the square mile (Netherlands 955, U.K. 590, Ceylon 480, India 410, USA 57, Kenya 45). The state of nutrition is appalling: 80% of the population suffers from vitamin deficiency and nearly half from a serious deficiency of calories. Life expectancy at birth was estimated at 48 years compared with 70 in developed countries; and infant mortality at over 140 per thousand

against less than 20 in developed countries. Less than a fifth of the population is believed to be literate. Even in urban areas 70 per cent of housing was temporary (without any masonry), 80 per cent without water and 97 per cent without electricity. Agricultural and ancillary activities, accounting for well over two-thirds of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employing over 70 per cent population, are mainly on a subsistence level. Large-scale manufacturing contributed only about 6 per cent to GDP and the whole of the modern sector (power, construction, manufacturing, modern transport and organised services) only 15 per cent.

Drought and flood have affected agricultural production for the last four years. Scientific safeguards against natural calamities are deplorably lacking in both India and Bangladesh. On current estimates food output is expected to total no

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more than 9m to 9½m tons for the present crop and financial year to June 30 against a requirement of 12m tons. However, UNROD (UN Relief Organisation in Dacca) has already supplied about 1½ m. tons of foodgrains for the current year but expressed its inability to supply more. The Dacca Government may thus have to buy at least 1½ m. tons of wheat on world markets in competition with equally large purchases by India and Pakistan and very large purchases by the USSR.

Even in united Bengal, there was scarcity of food, and rice was regularly imported from Burma.

The Government has envisaged export earnings of about \$340 m. for the current year and aid drawings imputed import requirement of about \$830 m. The import bill thus may be pushed very high by the need for food purchases, but earnings from exports of jute and jute goods may fall below the \$260m envisaged by the Planning Commission because of a series of large fires at jute mills and warehouses in November.

In January, the Bangladesh Government approached British tea companies to see whether they would be prepared to take over the management of about 35 tea gardens classified as "abandoned" property of owners in Pakistan after the 1971 civil war. The response to this approach is reported to have been cautious because of the difficulties of exploring profitable international markets for Bangladesh tea. After the 1965 Indo-Pakistani war with India, tea grown in erstwhile East Pakistan was no longer exported, but sold domestically in the larger area of industrialised Western Pakistan at favoured prices of about Rs 4 a pound, allowing a profit of Re 1 a pound. Since December 1971 Bangladesh tea has had to be sold on international markets at prices averaging Taka-2 a pound and less although production costs have remained at about their former level of Tk3 a pound. Moreover, Indian and Bangladesh teas are facing tough compe-

tition from Ceylonese tea on the European Common Market. The future appears to be bleak. Export earnings from hides etc. are insignificant.

Illusions of a mixed economy have affected the present immature bourgeois leadership of Bangladesh. Nationalization of the means of production is a humane concept but its implementation requires people who are trained and committed in the methodology of socialist economy. Otherwise nationalisation virtually amounts to bureaucratisation, as we find in India. The public sector in India has become the suppliers of raw materials to the private monopolists and in Bangladesh it will be a mere repetition in spite of the high-sounding pseudo-socialist preachings.

On March 26, 1972 the Government nationalised 85 per cent of the assets of the advanced industrial sector and on January 8, 1973 it announced its policy towards private and foreign industry and investment, exposing the character of the ruling class. Private industry would be limited to companies with fixed assets not exceeding TK2½ m. which would be allowed to grow up to TK3½ m. through reinvested profits. These would be guaranteed against nationalisation for ten years in the case of existing companies, and for ten years from the date of establishment in case of companies set up during the first five year plan to mid-1977. Foreign investment in the private sector would be limited to licences and patents, without equity participation. Other foreign investment will be allowed only in collaboration with the Government and up to a maximum of 49 per cent participation. Existing foreign firms would be required to incorporate under and comply with these proposed new laws governing private investment. Foreign firms would likewise be guaranteed against nationalisation for 10 years but for vultures one decade is enough to bleed the country white and to cripple it for another half a century. Remittances would be allowed of all post-tax dividends

and 50 per cent of net salaries of foreign individuals up to a limit of £150 a month, as well as savings, earnings, retirement benefits and personal assets of individuals retiring from service. Repatriation of foreign capital including capital gains and investment out of profits within the first ten years from the start of production would have to be spread over ten years. Sterling tea gardens are specifically exempted from these provisions.

Aid-giving countries are very enthused over the "gold mine" of Bangladesh; the government is under pressure for a commitment to share at least 1/5th of the debt erstwhile Pakistan. Of course, a condition has yet been laid down before any further aid is advanced. The government is in a fix. Bangladesh has been admitted to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The Bank group in October committed an initial amount of \$10 m. (half of it as a grant) to help development of Bangladesh telecommunications system. Whether Bangladesh would receive special trade concessions from the EEC, particularly for its jute exports, on the expiry of Commonwealth preferences a year after Britain's entry into Europe is not yet certain. On the plea of creating a demand for her exports on the world market, aid-giving countries, particularly Japan, are insisting on devaluation of Bangladesh currency to the extent of 20-30 per cent.

One has had enough of caricature in the name of mixed economy. It leads to nowhere. India and Bangladesh are two flowers of the same bush; they breathe the same polluted air of the Indo-Gangetic valley and there will be repetition of the same circus in Bangladesh also. In the power triangle of South Asia, India and Bangladesh are mere pawns in the hands of imperialist and social-imperialist super-powers; in the international arena they have no identity. However, the future of Bangladesh lies in the hands of her people. The days may not be far off when the waves of the Mekong will sweep over the Indo-Gangetic Valley.

Teachers' Cease-Work : An Assessment

BY A CORRESPONDENT

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THE recent cease-work of the college teachers started with a great hue and ended in gross capitulation. It is being said that the college teachers are going to benefit fully from the decision of the Government to fix their pay also, give them job security, etc., etc. But this is hardly the true picture of the situation. A brief review of the abortive struggle will show what really happened.

In March this year the WBCUTA organised an opinion poll on the form of struggle to be adopted to realise the demands. An overwhelming majority voted for indefinite cease-work. The teachers were prepared for all the consequences and were firmly united behind the leadership. The leaders, however, had no intention of waging an uncompromising struggle. They were interested primarily in being re-elected to the Executive Council and, secondarily, in providing a safe outlet for all the pent-up discontent and anger of the teachers. Also a show of bellicosity was necessary to hoodwink the general members once more. They would have used some other form of outlet if they could. But the referendum on the form of struggle left them with no alternative but a cease-work movement.

The Government has always ignored the economic demands of the teachers. And the WBCUTA leadership has always continued only to "talk" with the Government, even after it was quite obvious that nothing was going to be achieved by that. In 1970, because of a certain amount of pressure from the general members, the leadership resorted to a cease-work which, though totally unsuccessful, could not achieve anything substantial. The Government made a few promises which were

disregarded later. This movement had to be ended within a few days because of the impending Puja vacation. It was alleged by a spokesman of the Executive Council at the general meeting in which the strike was withdrawn that the general members were not willing to continue their movement, for that would mean going without their salaries during the Pujas. This is open to question. Were the leaders unaware of this possibility when they ceased work on the eve of the Puja vacation? Actually the strike was withdrawn because the leaders had no intention to harass the Government and they hurried to pacify the angry bureaucrats who were threatening them with dire consequences. Through this movement the leaders consolidated their thrones and subdued the voices of dissent for a while. They declared that the movement was a total victory. It was no doubt a victory for leaders, but for the general members it was merely another frustrating experience. Many of the general members understood the real character of the leadership. But they could not do anything to counter the betrayal, partly because of the lack of organised effort and partly because of a certain amount of apathy.

In the years that followed none of the Government's promises bore fruit. The WBCUTA leaders continued to talk and talk. Meanwhile, there were new developments that brought fresh hardships to the college teachers in particular and the teaching community in general.

In 1972 some teachers and the librarian of Sri Ramkrishna Sarada Mahavidyalaya of Kamarpukur were sacked unceremoniously. Their crime was that they held political opinions which did not tally with those of the

ruling party. This extraordinary and shameless attack on the democratic rights of the teachers caused hardly a ripple on the calm surface of the WBCUTA bog. Besides the Kamarpukur affair there were several cases of intimidation and beating up of teachers. The WBCUTA maintained a profound serenity. A large number of teachers all over the State were arrested and unlawfully detained in jails where they faced brutal torture. The WBCUTA kept mum. The general members started grumbling. Some of them distributed a leaflet at the 1972 Malda conference of the WBCUTA in which they decried the inaction of the leaders in such grave matters and pointed out that unless a struggle could be waged seriously after uniting with the students, the non-teaching staff and also the broad masses of the toiling people it would not be possible for the college teachers to realise their just demands and protect their rights. This very same advice of the "Save WBCUTA Committee" (the leaflet was signed in this name) was accepted by the general members, but the leadership was quite impervious. However, after long procrastination the WBCUTA started to fight, though rather lamely, for the victims of the Kamarpukur infamy. Their unconditional reinstatement was demanded. After a long period of struggle in which negotiations featured prominently, the Government passed a bill in March this year and took over the administration of the Sri Ramkrishna Sarada Mahavidyalaya. As soon as the news was out the General Secretary of the WBCUTA started furiously to congratulate the Chief Minister for his so-called courageous action. In the din it was conveniently forgotten that the sacked teachers were still out and their reinstatement was not even promised. The Kamarpukur issue immediately became secondary in the opinion of the leadership and in spite of suggestions from different quarters this issue was not included in the charter of demands of

the recent cease-work movement.

There was another attempt by the Government to squeeze the teachers. A sudden order reduced their DA. In the name of equalizing the DA of the sponsored and private college teachers, a unilateral decision to freeze the total DA to Rs. 150 in private colleges as a precondition for payment of the Government DA was made. Later this order was held in abeyance and a new order was issued which was even more unjust. It said that the teachers who were already drawing DA at the old rate would continue to do so, but those who would join service after April 1972 would get only Rs. 150. This is clearly an attempt to divide the teachers and to weaken them. It was also declared that teachers in unapproved posts would get no DA at all. No concerted and tenacious movement was organised even on this issue. The unjust order remained virtually unchallenged.

It will not be out of place here to enumerate a few economic difficulties that the college teachers have to face. The total salary of the teachers is inadequate. Even the paltry sum is given to them in several instalments, so that at the end of the month the average college teacher receives only about Rs. 230. There are many colleges in the State that do not pay even this amount and some colleges even pay nothing at all in some months. The college teachers do not get medical help, they do not have the benefit of pension and gratuity, they have to work under extremely demoralizing conditions. The resultant misery and hardship can easily be imagined. But what does the leadership of the WBCUTA do about all this? They wage a war of words.

Paper Drums

Nineteen seventy-three arrived and it was time to hold the annual conference of the WBCUTA. That meant another election and the Executive Council was keen about being re-elected, strictly in the interest of the general mass of the

college teachers, of course. Besides, the general members were grumbling again, they were becoming restless. So, once again the paper drums of the leaders started beating and they declared that the WBCUTA would take direct action to force the Government to accept all their demands. An opinion poll was organised and the general members were vehemently in favour of an indefinite cease-work. All the while, deputation after deputation was being sent to the Government and they were merrily submitting memoranda by the dozens. However the Special General Meeting of the WBCUTA on March 25 adopted a programme of the movement. It was resolved that (a) a mass deputation would be led on April 10 to the Chief Minister and the teachers would squat for 24 hours wherever they were obstructed; (b) token cease-work would be observed all over the State on April 11 and (c) continuous cease-work would start on and from April 18 in all the non-government colleges in West Bengal.

On April 10 teachers assembled at the Wellington Square. Prof Dilip Chakraborty spoke at length about the demands that were going to be placed before the Government. These demands were all economic and very much justified. But there was no mention of the gross infringement of the fundamental democratic rights of the teachers nor was it noted that everywhere in the country freedom of the people was being trampled upon. These demands did not include release of prisoners and withdrawal of the MISA. After the speech teachers went to Esplanade East in a procession where they were duly stopped by the police. The teachers began the 24-hour squatting. Representatives went to the Chief Minister with the charter of demands. Here a leaflet was distributed by the 'Save WBCUTA Committee (Preparatory)', of whom a mention has been made in this article previously. In the leaflet the Committee congratulated the general members for their fighting spirit

and urged them to incorporate in the charter of demands the unconditional release of political prisoners and immediate withdrawal of the MISA. It pointed out that the WBCUTA should take immediate steps to extend support to the teachers in Haryana who are facing jail and torture for daring to fight for their just demands. The leaflet also reminded the teachers that just like the 1970 cease-work the present movement was also starting on the eve of a vacation and the members must defeat all attempts of the enemy to thwart the struggle. The leaflet was enthusiastically received by the general members. Everyone except the leaders were convinced that the leaflet spoke the truth.

The representatives came back empty-handed. The squatting continued. On April 11 all the college teachers of West Bengal stayed away from their classes. But the Government remained obdurate.

On April 14, 15 and 16 the annual conference of the WBCUTA was held in Serampore College. On the 16th the annual general meeting was held. Here also the 'Save WBCUTA Committee' distributed a bulletin. They pointed out once again that it was imperative that the WBCUTA should fight against the gross infringement of our fundamental democratic rights. WBCUTA should, the bulletin continued, actively support the just struggles of their colleagues in other States and also those of the students. It should integrate with the broad masses of the toiling people and actively support their just struggles. WBCUTA should bring about unity between teachers, students and the non-teaching staff. The bulletin blamed the leaders for deliberately ignoring to carry out these tasks.

In the annual general meeting the Executive Council was re-elected without contest. It was said that 'all sections of the General Committee members felt that with the movement as the top priority, all energy must be aimed at preserving the unity in our ranks and

any thought, there was no use dissipating energy in fighting for a seat in the Executive Council".

After this the annual general meeting resolved to start a continuous cease-work movement in order to force the Government to concede the demands of the college teachers. This resolution was adopted amidst great enthusiasm and fervour. Everyone thought that this time they would really fight and surely make the Government come to terms, their terms.

The cease-work started on April 10. In some colleges the authorities tried to disrupt the strike by attempting to close the colleges for the summer much earlier than scheduled and by making the teachers submit the notice for the suspension of classes. But the teachers remained firm and did not allow such things to happen. With commendable unity of purpose the 7000 private and sponsored college teachers ceased to take their classes, paralysing thereby the whole structure of higher education in West Bengal. The situation looked extremely promising. The movement was a total success.

11 Days

The cease-work continued for 11 hectic days. Several letters were sent to the Government. The replies were not satisfactory. The leaders of the WBCUTA talked with the Government time and again and also with several non-government people. They had special talks with the Chhatra Parishad and Yuba Congress leaders who expressed their full support for the teachers' cause. Too many felt, was suspicious, for these people can hardly be called champions of justice and freedom. Many teachers gravely resented these acts. The leaders were almost pathetic in their eagerness to stop the strike. Their statements seemed to imply—this unfortunate affair is very embarrassing for us, we cannot help it, you know, the general members must be pacified. As days passed the tone of the WBCUTA lead-

ers began to soften. Earlier the leaders had proclaimed that there would be no compromise and that all the demands must be fulfilled before the teachers went back to their classes. Later they started saying, give us something, we are ready to rejoin our duties. Their concern for the students suddenly became very intense. They said that one should not be too intransigent, moderation was necessary, it was never possible in a movement to realize all its demands, partial victory was also important.

As time went on and the tone of the leaders became softer and softer and degenerated into whining, the general members gradually started to lose hope. Their worst suspicions were moving towards confirmation. True to the time-honoured tradition of betrayal the leaders were preparing to stab the movement in the back.

On April 24 a special general meeting was summoned. Everyone was certain that the leaders were going to withdraw the cease-work though the 16 points of the charter of demand had still not been accepted by the Government. The notice for the meeting was published in various daily newspapers. Curiously enough, the venue of the meeting was not clearly mentioned. Even then a large number of teachers attended the meeting. Cyclo-styled copies of the recommendations of the Executive Council were distributed. The council said the cease-work should be suspended, for in the latest communication sent by the Government almost all the demands had been conceded and a time-limit set for implementation. The majority of the teachers gravely resented this. They felt that the Government had only promised to meet the demands. Until written official orders were received and implemented these promises had no value at all. Similar promises had been made in 1970 and in the following years. These are yet to be fulfilled. Besides, several important demands such as the withdrawal of the

government order that said that no more than Rs. 158 as DA would be paid to the new entrants, were not even promised to be met. The Kamarpukur affair was not settled. So, the general members of the WBCUTA felt that there was no valid reason for withdrawing the cease-work at that stage. But everyone knew that the leadership would withdraw the strike, the opinion of the ordinary teachers notwithstanding. There was anger in the air, the resentment was voiced now and then.

In this atmosphere Prof Dilip Chakraborty, the General Secretary, started to speak. After a lot of verbal sidestepping, he finally came to the point. The Government had promised to meet the demands and so the Government should be given one more chance. After three months the WBCUTA would review the situation.

A concerted groan went up from the assemblage. Angry voices started demanding explanation for this extraordinary recommendation. The strike must not be withdrawn, the struggle must continue until the demands were really met, shouted the teachers. Prof Santosh Mitra took the floor. His reasoning was difficult to understand. He accused the general members of ignorance about the methods of struggle and said that they must suspend the cease-work as they wanted the reinstatement of their retrenched colleagues of Kamarpukur College. The general members listened to all these patiently, but when Prof Mitra said with great confidence that they had neither won the fight nor lost it, the remark was greeted with cries of derision and the teachers started to protest against the high-handed manner of the leaders and their betrayal of the cause of the teachers. Their policy of compromise was against the interest of the teachers. The general members raised slogans urging the WBCUTA to wage an uncompromising fight, criticising the leaders for their policy of capitulation, and emphasizing the importance of unified struggle. The lead-

ers and their lackeys tried to reply with slogans like "Long Live WBCUTA", "Down with the sowers of discord", "Down with those who want to break up the unity of the teachers". The teachers who were protesting against the withdrawal of the strike also cried, "Long Live WBCUTA", but said that they were not ready to countenance the gross betrayal. The leaders could not decide what to do in the face of the spontaneously organised protest. The teachers who were preparing the 'Save WBCUTA Committee' took the lead in this protest.

Suddenly a few teachers rushed towards the dais and tried to attack these leaders physically.

There was a scuffle on the dais and in the melee it could not be ascertained what exactly was happening or who the attackers were. Later it was heard that these subscribed to the politics of the ruling party. They were aggrieved because they were not taken into the Executive Council.

As soon as this incident took place the protest that was gradually becoming stronger faded away. The incident helped the leaders to turn the tide and to suppress the voices of dissent. The meeting continued for a long time after this. The leaders spoke with great emotion and feeling. Those who tried to point out the failure of the struggle to achieve its object were not allowed to speak. The recommendations of the Executive Council were passed with so-called unanimity and the strike that could have been a great victory ended ignominiously.

This, of course, is nothing new. The WBCUTA leaders never wage serious struggles and care very little for the individual general members. On the other hand, the general members are fed up with the WBCUTA, they openly abuse the leaders, and most of them take no interest in the affairs conducted by the organisation. What is wrong with it? The WBCUTA has always failed to embody the needs and aspirations of its members. The teachers are

a part of the society and their problems are not divorced from those of society in general. The WBCUTA does not associate itself with the social problems at all and is therefore fast becoming defunct.

The WBCUTA is not fighting to protect fundamental democratic rights. It is not uniting with the students, the non-teaching staff and not forming a united front. The leadership is responsible for the failure to do all these. It is only natural for the WBCUTA to lose the allegiance of its members.

The teaching community has now become definitely conscious of the social reality. It is clear to it now that until the huge rural population is liberated from exploitation and until it can enter the schools and colleges in large numbers, no true regeneration of the decayed education system is possible. It is quite clear that as long as the economy of this country is dominated by the imperialists and its compradors the creative faculty of the people will remain untapped and the crisis of society in general and of the education system in particular will not be resolved. Until the education system learns to carry out its social responsibility, our lot will never improve. These are basic questions. The WBCUTA has always evaded these issues. So long as it continues to do so, it will never be able to fulfil its obligation to society as a mass organization. The WBCUTA at present has merely a democratic veneer, but is not truly democratic.

To come out of the rut, WBCUTA must change its basic policies drastically. It must learn to reflect the aspirations of the teachers correctly. It must forge an invincible unity between the teachers, the students and non-teaching staff. It must wage an uncompromising struggle to safeguard our economic and democratic rights. It must fight by the side of the workers and peasants. Only then will the WBCUTA fulfil its obligation to society and be able to rally all the teachers to fight for economic and political freedom.

A Report

The Will Continue To Eat Rats

This paper (abridged) was prepared for the Land Reform Division Planning Commission, and the Working Group on Land Reforms, National Commission on Agriculture, New Delhi, on the basis of a field trip to the Pandaul Block of Madhubani district and the Mushahar Block of Muzaffarpur district, Bihar on April 8 and 9, 1973.

IN Pandaul Block the Group met a number of representatives of bataidars and landowners and local officials dealing with revenue, land reforms and development, in an open meeting and tried to ascertain from them the present situation in the agrarian sector. The representatives of the C.P.I. led Kisan Sabha pointed out that not a single bataidar was recorded during the survey and settlement field operation which was concluded in that area only recently. According to them, all the staff of the Settlement Department were 'bought over' by the landowners, as a result of which the stubbornly refused to record any sharecropper. Finding no other way, members of the Kisan Sabha assaulted some field staff, who under duress took down in a 'katcha khata' the names of the bataidars. Later on they came to know that their names were not incorporated and the field records stood as they were. They alleged that with the connivance of the local revenue and Block staff, a vast water area belonging to the bhanga Raj was not taken possession of by the State and was allowed to be retained by the landowner. At this point, the local Block Development Officer intervened and said that the matter went up to the High Court and judgment went against the Government. The Kisan Sabha leader further complained that sharecroppers were being evicted

the sweet will of the landowners, but the landowners were highly organised and that they always got the support of the police and the magistrates in their action against the sharecroppers. He cited the example of Sahibeli where the 'Mohant' of a religious trust killed 7 sharecroppers who came to harvest the crop in the last season. At this point, one of the representatives of the landowners who claimed himself to be a small farmer stood up and protested and asked whether the laws of the land had ceased to operate in this part of the country. He asserted that the killing was fully justified as the so-called sharecroppers were politically motivated outsiders who were deliberately looting the crop of the religious trust.

The landowners' representatives stated that they had no objection in principle to get the names of the sharecroppers recorded but they insisted that only real sharecroppers should be recorded. On a point of information they admitted that no bataidar had been put on record. They also stated that no sharecroppers should be recorded in the retainment list of the landowners after the operation of the ceiling law. At this point, a question was asked as to whether there was any possibility of getting any surplus land through operation of the recently amended Bihar Ceiling Act. On this, the unanimous opinion of all the landowners present was that nothing would be available. When it was further asked whether such lands had already been dispensed among friends, relatives etc. through benami and fictitious transfer to avoid the ceiling they openly admitted it and asked a counter-question whether there was anything wrong about it.

The attitude of the local officers was also rather queer. In the presence of the Working Group they did not, of course, show any partisanship in favour of the landowners; but they betrayed an attitude of hostility and neutrality towards the bataidars. The fact that no bataidar was recorded in spite of the law and the posi-

tive Government instruction on the subject did not cause even the slight embarrassment to the officers present. This was, perhaps, the most natural thing to happen and therefore should cause neither surprise nor embarrassment since nature must take its own course.

"Looked Gapingly"

Thereafter, towards the evening we went to Mouza Sorhai—about a couple of kilometres away from Block headquarters. Here we were shown a vast tract of land—according to local statement approximately 800 acres—wherefrom about 250 bataidars were evicted by sheer physical force by the employees of the Darbhanga Raj in 1970. Since then they had been trying to get back possession of the land, but to no effect. Fourteen criminal cases were instituted against these sharecroppers. Altogether 32 persons suffered imprisonment as undertrial prisoners and they were being harassed very frequently by the police and the magistracy. When it was asked why they did not move the Magistrate for obtaining order u/s 144 Cr. P.C. in their favour against the Darbhanga Raj, the bataidars and the accompanying officials looked gapingly at us. That Section 144 Cr. P.C. could also be applied against the landowners and in favour of the bataidars was something quite surprising to both the parties.

Social tension in the Madhubani area is apparent even to casual visitors. The fact that the bataidars are meekly and timidly submitting to their masters' will does not prove that things are all right everywhere. Landowners also understand this. Hence, they react so violently against any overt sign of social disorder. They are organised and aggressive. They will not let their treasured heirlooms slip through their clutches. With an obliging administration on their side, they are definitely not going to give up an iota of their rights, privileges and economic dominance without a stiff fight, notwithstanding the thunderous oration for

the rural underdogs at distant Patna, the reverberations of which hardly ever reach the backwoods of Madhubani.

On 9th April the Working Group visited the Musahari Block of Muzaffarpur district. This area earned some notoriety in early 1970 because of Naxalite activities. About half a dozen big landholders and usurious moneylenders were killed by Naxalites. It created consternation in the highest level of the Government as well as among the philanthropists and social reformers. Shri J. P. Narayan, the venerable leader of the Sarvodaya movement, thought that the Naxalite threat was an urgent call to demonstrate through positive action how the challenge of violence could be used to speed up the process of non-violent social change and reconstruction that Vinobaji had initiated through his Gramdan-Gram Swaraj Movement. He went to the area and camped there for about a year from June 1970. J. P.'s stay in the Musahari Block to 'fight' the Naxalite menace through non-violent means brought some of the basic issues which underlay the social unrest to limelight.

Rural violence is nothing new on the Bihar agrarian scene. Application of naked force and coercion for deprivation of the share of the crop of the bataidars and their ultimate eviction is a common feature of agrarian relations there. Only the other day 15 Santhal sharecroppers were murdered, three among them being burnt alive at Rupaspur in the Roupola Block in Kosi Division. Such incidents, however, undesirable they might be, were common occurrences in any harvesting season. They, therefore, did not create any commotion except, perhaps, temporarily in the places of occurrence and in the homes of the victims. They did not in any way pose any threat to the stability of the social order. What was unusual at Musahari was that the offensive was launched on behalf of the rural poor against the tyranny of the rural rich—a situation which no one in

Bihar was accustomed to. This was a new phenomenon with grave and dangerous potentialities. Cognizance had to be taken of this threat by all both inside and outside the Government. Instant action was called for to snuff out this quivering flicker of revolt of the rural poor. The Sarvodaya Movement took up the ameliorative portion of the job, leaving the administration to take stern measures to put out the unrest and to restore order and tranquillity.

Among the gentlemen present at the Block headquarters was one Mr Tewari. His village Madavpur was a Gramdan village. He was the Secretary of the Gram Sabha. He appeared very active and energetic and he insisted that the Group should visit his village to get an idea of the effect of the combined efforts of Gram Swaraj movement and AVARD, the Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development. The village was approximately 2½ k.m. away from the Block Office. From the black-topped district road, a newly constructed motorable kutchha road connected the village. This road was constructed by AVARD. The road led one directly to the twin residential houses of the Tewaris. The stark contrast between the modern residential buildings of the Tewaris with white piano-key switch boards, concealed electrical wiring, silver painted grills and the surrounding dilapidated, thatched hovels where lived the wretched of the earth, was, to say the least, shocking. The Group was well looked after by the Tewaris. The Secretary of the Gram Sabha showed his concern about the mounting indebtedness of the small and poor farmers. According to his assessment the total indebtedness of his village was about Rs. 90,000. Many poor and small peasants who took loan from the moneylenders were working as bataidars or farm hands on lands which were once their own, because of their inability to repay the loan and cumulative interest thereon. Shri Tewari had a plan for redemption of these loans if he

could secure some money from the Banks. He requested the Chairman of the Group to intercede on his behalf with the authorities of any nationalised bank.

For Whom?

Thereafter, the Group was taken to the site of one of the two deep tubewells sunk by AVARD to ensure perennial irrigation for multiple cropping. A small group of villagers gathered under a nearby tree to watch casually the goings on of the Tewaris and the Babus from Patna.

They had seen such visitors before and did not seem to be particularly interested in the present batch of tourists. After a little prodding they whispered that the Tewaris were the largest landowners of the village, that the tubewells were sunk in their lands and that they would naturally be the main beneficiaries of all the developmental activities of AVARD. It was also revealed that the landowners of the village systematically evicted the bataidars and converted them into farm hands. Agricultural workers got 3½ 'katchha' seers of inferior grains like bajra, kanol, sama, etc., for each day of work. Employment, however, was casual and intermittent. With the tubewells sunk gratis by AVARD, houses illuminated and free pump-sets energised by the rural electrification scheme, with motorable roads constructed by AVARD making it easy to bring modern inputs of agriculture and to export marketable surplus to good mandis afar, and with the Block extension services to give new HYV seeds and to teach new and better cultural practices to substantially improve the yield, the Tewaris of Madhavpur had a prosperous future to look forward to. But with 3½ katchha seers of inferior grains as daily wages, the long spells of unemployment, with large numbers of mouths per family to feed, field rats would continue to be the staple source of protein for the Musahars (rat-eaters) of Musahari, for quite some time to come. With

the concentration of land in a few hands, it was only inevitable and natural that all the benefits of the developmental activities of AVARD and the like agencies would accrue only to the big landowners. What crumbs the rural poor would collect in future might be a matter of conjecture but we had definite evidence to indicate that at Musahari the bread had already gone to the rich.

By their abysmal failure to implement the laws, the authorities in Bihar have reduced the whole package of land reforms measure to a sour joke. This has emboldened the landowning class to treat the entire issue of agrarian reforms with utter contempt. Elsewhere in the country, the law evaders have a sneaking respect for the law enforcing authority. Their approach is furtive—their method clandestine. In Bihar the landowners do not care twopence for the administration. They take it for granted. Their approach is defiant—their mode of operation open and insolent. Violence has been ruthlessly suppressed at Musahari and elsewhere. But the problems remain unresolved. They are uncommunicative and mute. The village poor at Musahari made no choice between Baiju Shahu, the landowning mukhia-cum-mahajan who held almost the whole village in mortgage, and Raj Kishore, the young lad who had the guts to put test against the accumulated injustice and tyranny and to pay the extreme penalty for it.

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Book Review

TERMINOLOGY IN INDIAN LAND REFORMS

By P. T. George

Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Poona, and Orient Longman Ltd., New Delhi 1972. Price Rs. 20.00.

THIS is a most welcome publication at an opportune moment when there is an increasing awareness everywhere about the crucial importance of land relations in general. In our government circles too it is becoming increasingly modish to talk about land reforms and a new spate of legislative measures is on since 1970.

The book collects several hundred terms used in 200 Acts pertaining to land relations in different parts of India. As it was completed in 1969-70 the more recent enactments could not be covered. The book itself is divided into two parts: the main body containing only the words taken literally from the various Acts, while the Glossary has words that are used but not defined in the Acts. Quite rightly, the author has taken particular care in explaining words borrowed from the various Indian languages which have crept into the statute books. Wherever possible exact quotations from relevant Acts are used to define or explain terms. In some cases quotations from such well-known authorities as Baden-Powell are given; in some others the author himself explains. For these reasons the work has an authoritative character.

A perfect book does not exist and a reviewer's job is said to be incomplete unless some deficiencies, minor or major, are pointed out. On the minor side, there is a slip on the page on abbreviations; 'Mds' for Madras is left out. There are a few examples where the author's judgment can be questioned. 'Labha' is a term used in Maharashtra meaning gain or profit; the same word means the same thing in many other parts of the country, which might have been in-

cluded. Apparently 'fauzdari sudalat' in Madras stands for 'a court of justice'; this is doubtful since in the North it always means a criminal court. The word 'khas' appears in the Glossary where its meaning in Madras is given; in the main text 'khas possession' occurs with a totally different connotation in accordance with the Bihar and Orissa usages. It would have been better to put them all in one place to avoid confusion. For, a reader, once he has found the word in one place, might not be careful enough to check for an alternative meaning elsewhere in the book.

When I looked for the term 'land personally cultivated'—a very key term a liberal definition of which enables big farms to evade many of the provisions of land reform Acts, I also found two other terms 'personal cultivation' and 'cultivate personally'. Though these are practically interchangeable, there are no cross references. It would have been much better if all these were put together as one entry. Even then I failed to find quotations from the Acts of Kerala, Punjab and Bihar.

In some cases the explanations are too brief. The 'kota' is simply a 'type of tenancy cultivation in Orissa'. I am sure everyone, i.e. anyone who looks it up, would like to know more about its nature. Or take a more important word like 'raiya', i.e. "one who holds the land". The ambiguity of the term 'hold' is too well known, it implies 'possession' with or without 'ownership' rights. But after the various land reforms Acts a 'raiya' is essentially one who is the owner with occupancy right. A 'raiya' can even lease out his land thereby ceasing to 'hold' in the ordinary sense of the word. However, if the lease is not formally registered—and this is most widespread, the owner continues, legally speaking, to 'hold' the land. I do not think the Acts themselves are unclear on this point, but the quotations given certainly are. Only a small amount of supplementary information would have dispelled any possible misunderstand-

ing. In many other instances some brief explanations would lead to greater clarity.

On the whole, such minor alterations along the lines indicated above would enhance the use-value of the book; merging the main text and the Glossary would be another of such painless operations.

In future editions—we hope there will be at least one more—it may be worthwhile to broaden the scope of the book to include terms or meanings not derived exclusively from the Acts. Under 'agricultural labour' one might include the various meanings of the term as per Censuses or National Sample Surveys, etc. Against words like 'sir', 'jagir', etc. the original or late Moghul connotations might be given as well. Further, a large number of local terms like 'kisheni' or 'khaikhalashi' etc. illuminating various aspects of land relations which did not get incorporated into the Acts, could be introduced. This will make it far more useful not only for the specialists working in related fields but also for the general reader who has an interest in the subject. But then the table of the book would need a change too.

N. K. CHANDRA

Rupantari's New Play

HITEN GHOSH

BENGALI drama rarely achieves an abiding quality. The more popular theatrical successes add little to the worth of dramatic literature. Their appeal rests partly on technical devices and even more on a crude sentimental content. The vast body of dramatic output for the past one hundred years scarcely contains a single play which would be worth reading, not to say reviving, today except as part of a patriotic ritual. Of course, I exclude Tagore whose plays are still well worth reading—but not as drama, only as 'poetry'.

The mere theatrical aspect of this dramatic tradition is admittedly pri-

mitive for the most part. But hardly less so is the religious and patriotic emotion which is the most characteristic stuff of the plays. New styles of production—Brechtian, absurd, et al—have taken the place of older tools and corresponding to this, a new social and political content has also appeared. But neither the content nor the style of production has made any significant departure from the past in exploring depths of human experience. As in the past, the technical imitation remains the most successful aspect of the experiment though striking one inevitably with its trumpery air. But the new social and political themes also resemble the old religious and patriotic stuff. Both are just mush.

There is something in our way of looking at life and the world around which precludes a detached, objective outlook. The content of our dramatic literature reflects our collective day-dreams. There is thus a curious disproportion between the extreme modishness of acting and stagecraft and the crudity of the actual emotional effect produced by the play as such. The effect is almost always slushy, undramatic and rudely contrived.

কিশোর ও যুব-ছাত্রদের মুখপত্র

বৌদ্ধ (১ম বর্ষ ৩য় সংখ্যা, মে-৭৩)

প্রকাশিত হয়েছে

ই সংখ্যার আছে—কোপারনিকাস / স্কুলে
ক্রমে শরীর বিজ্ঞা / অস্ত্রভুক্ত / "শিক্ষিত"
কার সমস্তার "নতুন" সমাধান / দ্বন্দ্বাদি
বদ্বৈহ / বলেজ শিক্ষকদের সাম্প্রতিক
আন্দোলন / "অপারেশন ফ্লাগ" / ছাত্র আন্দোলন
নের দলিল / গল্প / কবিতা / বিশ্ববাসিতা /
পত্রপত্রিকার দর্পণ / বিদ্যুৎ শিক্ষা গগন /
বিসংখ্যান...

সব স্টলেই পাওয়া যাচ্ছে

In spite of this general ineptness, a few Bengali plays have occasionally come near to achieving the true dramatic art. Mr Jochhan Dastidar's *Padya-Gadya-Prabandha* might also stake its claim as one of them but for the final effect. Once again there is a failure to take a hard, unflinching look at reality and interpret it truthfully. After showing a capacity for realism the playwright-director slips into outworn political clichés and fobs off with a fake solution to the complex issue. Even the posing of the issue is tendentious. The solution itself is posed as a reconciliation between a politically conscious middle class and lumpens. The contending sides apparently unite at the end after their mutual hate and violence had led to a tragedy. All this remains vague and is barely suggested, but it is there.

There is little objective preparation for what happens in the end. The events and characters do not move in such a way as to make the tragedy inevitable. Nor is the final realisation of the meaning of this tragedy achieved through suffering and sacrifice. Besides, the major part of the play moves along such a work-a-day plane that the conclusion seems rather high-sounding. There is a sudden jerk from the general tenor of the play to the tragic end and its moral conclusion. All this belongs to the sloppy tradition of Bengali theatre. But there is so much to be thankful for in this play that one can't help regretting it in this instance. The pity is all the greater because the play just about misses being a minor masterpiece of its kind.

A middle-class home passes from happy, carefree optimism to cheerless despair when its only son, an M.A., fails to get a job. The loving father's harsh words drive him from home. The whole idyllic atmosphere is poisoned with the bitterness of ruined hopes. The young man cannot marry the girl he loves. Here, too, disappointment brings bitterness and finally causes estrangement. Their parents, who were once so friendly, also fall out in an unseemly manner.

The change of mood between the earlier and subsequent family scenes is sharply brought out. Each scene within the walls of a crumbling house alternates with one on the road outside where young stragglers are poorer and already broken before they draft aimlessly. These have never been to a college and never had any hope. They do not pass from day-dreams to despair. Hopelessness is part of their existence. Their fathers are drunk and beat their mothers. In their case, loving parents do not quarrel and feel shame—although they too are driven to this by their misery.

The Road

Both situations have a basic similarity. The contrast and identity is brought to an equally sharp focus. The road before the house with its two sets of characters passing one another with mutual contempt and hostility is used excellently for the purpose. The use of cinematic freeze for sudden switches from one set of characters and scene of action to the other also serves the same end. The scene that goes off is from inside while the contrasting situation comes alive behind or beyond the house-walls. There are some processes similar to cuts used in films. The device of leaving the two parts of the stage darkened and lit-up in turn according as the scene of action shifts while the two sets of characters remain alternately fixed in their stances, emphasises the continuous co-existence and complementary nature of the two aspects of the same reality. There is some evocation of Gorky-like atmosphere in rendering the lower depths of despair.

So far the play is an able piece of both dramatic writing and dramatic production. But the young hero suddenly takes to championing the cause of striking workers in a neighbouring soap-factory in an effort to change the existing social order so that all may find work. His discovery of a new political faith and identity is unconvincing. Nor is it clear how supporting a strike

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wage-rise for the workers is going to change the existing society. But the worst part of the matter is when the semi-lumpens are used to break the strike. They are tempted by the prospect of getting jobs in the factory. They burst some crackers and, with help from the police, disperse pickets at the factory gate—all off-stage—and enable the factory to be re-opened. They end by murdering the young hero and his friend. But they are not given jobs. So they take out their revolvers and resolve to change the social order, again to find jobs for all. And the dead hero's father chimes in with the call.

Not for once do the workers seem to hold the scales between the contending factions and ultimately destined to shape the outcome. Some of them appear on the stage for the purpose of sticking posters and getting knifed. There are two unnecessary cases of torture perpetrated by both sides. But all these are minor blemishes compared with the stupid way in which a political significance is sought to be woven into the story by two young men's self-sacrifice. Not only is there a lack of development but the conception of the young men's involvement with the striking workers and their death at the hands of unemployed roughs falls into a familiar pattern of thinking.

But I would still set down my deliberate opinion that *Padya-Gadya-Prabandha* is a remarkable play and its performance by Rupantari is well worth seeing. The acting is of a very high standard. The lumpen roles, Rajendra and Sashi, are rendered with exuberant verve and gusto. Mr Joghthan Dastidar, as Naren, gives an outstanding performance. Mrs Dastidar supports him well but she was often inaudible even from the fifth row. Mr Shyamal Sengupta plays Badal, the young hero, suitably, but he has perhaps given a better account of himself in other roles. Mr

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Satyabrata Dasgupta is insufferable—more because of his role perhaps, which is otiose and might well be dispensed with.

With so much skill in acting and theatrical panache it might still be possible to rescue the play from the dullness and inanity of its ending. The lumpen characters would then have to be treated more sympathetically and the middle-class youths less idealistically. The concluding development of the action must seem more natural and the contrary involvement of social classes should be less naively posed. The workers can be brought in with a greater sense of purpose and increasing predominance. The final resolution of the conflict may be 'tragic' and need not be followed by loud proclamations of faith in revolution. When the setback is real, even if temporary, the reality of failure must not be slurred over. For hopes can be made to shine even through the darkest clouds.

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—Illustrated Weekly

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Three Exhibitions

SANDIP SARKAR

NIKHILESH Das' fourth one-man show at the Birla Academy from May 8 to May 18 (subtitled for some reason 'Series of Myself') showed signs of marked improvement compared to his previous exhibitions. He is not yet certain what he would like to do. He is still exploring, but in an experiment is not as important as the result. He has used thick pigments and experimented in creating an illusion of surfaces being blocked and yet capable of illumination. His figures are bold, although a bit tortured. But on the other hand there are other canvases where he has painted just pretty pictures, a greeting-card type approach to attract buyers.

His serious paintings, however, indicate his involvement with certain spatial problems which he wants

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to solve in terms of figures and colour. There is a vigour in his shapes and expedience in his forms which hold out promises.

Simultaneously with this exhibition there was yet another in the adjoining room by members of Nikhilesh Das' studio. All of them are his disciples, some are more or less influenced by him. The room was overcrowded by their work.

Kashinath Roy, Netai Bose, Pratip Manna, Tapan Mondal and Swapna Ray Choudhury show promise and a certain maturity together with amateurishness in approach. Samir Banerjee's pen and ink drawings show his inclination to graphics. All of them should leave Nikhilesh's shadow and face the sun themselves.

Sajal Ray's Show

Sajal Ray's fourth one-man show was held in the Birla Academy in late April. His last was in 1970. So people came to this exhibition with the hope that he would vindicate his long absence from the art world. However, one came away with mixed feelings.

Sajal is a social-conscious artist aware of his responsibility. But it is not just this that makes an artist. Conscious awareness of social conditions may help an artist in the choice of content, but it is stylization, composition, drawing, use of colours which finally make or spoil a canvas. In this also Sajal has shown that he can handle problems competently. His muscular figures dominate the canvas and crowd for elbow space—you almost feel that you are walking in the bustling streets of Calcutta. There is an element of drama, for they are active participants in events. They aspire to become human in an atmosphere of inhumanity and fail. Dazed by the agonizing situation they yet do not give up the struggle. Sajal wants to inspire people to stand up against tyranny and injustice. Mercifully he communicates his message in a

fashion which falls short of propaganda.

Most of his canvases are grim but some have an element of hope. There are two or three that are so different in mood that they disturb the atmosphere, e.g. "The Devil and Peace", a painting of two beautiful cocks, and "Frightened Waves" (Nos. 7 and 7). The latter vaguely reminds one of Kuniyoshi's "the priest Nichiren stilling a storm at sea" (c. 1835). No doubt these canvases are very skilful but they did not go with the other canvases in this exhibition.

Sajal's strong point is his drawing. His purposely distorted figures, whether human or animal, vibrate with life. His shapes and form have an attractive boldness. He has a first-rate sense of colour. However, there is one snag. He has been influenced, influenced perhaps is too mild a word, enslaved by Picasso. Sajal's large canvas "War against Monster" leans heavily on the master's shoulder. Such powerful paintings as "Dormancy" which has a nude woman lying in bed done in brownish yellow and blue, strongly remind one of the departed warrior. Sajal's whole approach is so Picassoesque that one can only tell him—get rid of your fetters or you are done for.

Letters

Dark Side Of The Circus

Those who display extraordinary feats in the circus arena are considered by spectators as artistes. But our service career is never guaranteed to last long. We are doomed to extreme suffering or even surprise discharge any moment according to the whims and caprices of the circus-owners and their sycophants. The circus employees have no union to resist the owners. The slightest endeavour to form a union will be defeated by either oppression or discharge from service.

We entertain the young and the aged alike, risking our lives but lose our importance as soon as the show

is over. We swing between life and death for our daily bread, but our mind haunted by fear of unexpected dismissal. Security for the families of 50,000 circus employees and artistes in case of accident (which is frequent) is no concern of any authority. We have no arrangements for life insurance, no provision for provident fund, no medical aid, no opportunity for overtime, no home, no commonplace food and lodging, no scope for children's education, no chance for any kind of leave or relaxation.

When we are fired, the situation gets pretty bad. We are stranded at the place where we lose our all. The owners, who are entitled to get some refund from us, sell our bags and baggages, whereas we who are entitled to get some balance are told to come later for the money.

The Government should form a national circus to be managed exclusively by itself. This would require an investment of Rs. 8 lakhs to 10 lakhs. There are national circuses in some countries, e.g., Russia, Germany etc.

KASHINATH ROY
and other aggrieved circus
artistes and employees
Calcutta

Chinese Aid

The remark—"The terms are most attractive, usually no interest charges and repayment over 10 to 30 years" in the "Economic News and Notes" by A.B.C. (5-5-73) gives rise to two questions—whether China actually charges, even if at a very low rate in few cases, interest on loans and if so, whether this charging of interest on loans by a socialist country is just from the Marxian point of view.

XYZ
Calcutta

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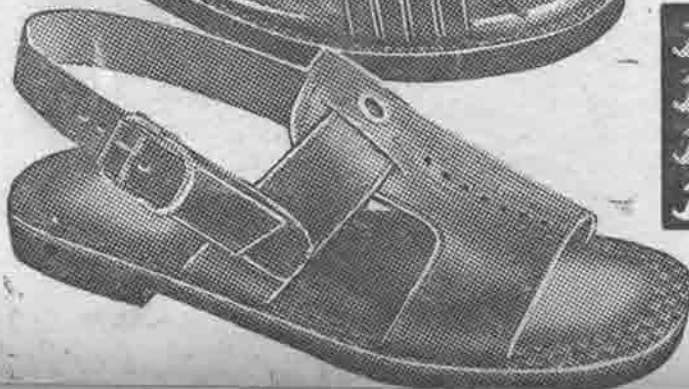


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